APRIL 2025

FREE • ONLINE • IN PRINT

Between the Lines™

WEDDING EDITION

WHEN LOVE WON'T WAIT

Michigan couples who raced to the altar amid growing uncertainty

LOVE'S HIGHER AUTHORITY

Affirming Michigan faith leaders standing strong

OUR HEROIC HISTORY

New book honors past, present marriage equality trailblazers

THE

WEDDING ISSUE

Create a positive mindset and a healthier living space when you get your home Hagopian Clean. Refresh your home now from top to bottom and save!

AIR DUCT CLEANING

$100 OFF

State-of-the-art Cyclone System Air Duct Cleaning

Must present coupon. Some restrictions apply. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers.
Expires 4/26/25

CARPET CLEANING

$149

3 Rooms + Hall In-Home Carpet Cleaning

Must present coupon. Up to 250 sq. ft. each room. Some restrictions apply. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers.
Expires 4/26/25

PICK-UP & DELIVERY

$25 OFF

Rug and/or Outdoor Cushion Cleaning Pick-up & Delivery Service

Must present coupon at time of pick up. Some restrictions apply. Not to be combined with any other coupons/offers.
Expires 4/26/25

OUTDOOR CUSHION CLEANING

Bring your outdoor cushions, pillows, umbrellas and rugs in today so you'll be ready to enjoy your outdoor spaces.

The Most Trusted Name in Cleaning Since 1939

HAGOPIAN
CLEANING SERVICES

1-800-HAGOPIAN (424-6742) **HagopianClean.com**

SCHEDULE ONLINE!

Dr. Paul Benson's

Be Well Medical Center

EST. 1980: THE ORIGINAL LGBTQ CLINIC IN MICHIGAN

The Right Choice for Your Health

Since 1980, Be Well Medical Center has delivered compassionate, patient-centered healthcare. Led by Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein, our dedicated team prioritizes your well-being. As credentialed HIV specialists, we offer PrEP and Doxy PEP. Our inclusive approach ensures top-quality care for all backgrounds and lifestyles.

We are thrilled to introduce Dr. Andrew Roberts, a dedicated pediatrician specializing in care for individuals from birth to 21 years. Our clinic is now a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ youth seeking primary care.

Dr. Andrew Roberts with a Be Well Medical Center patient.

Four Locations

Be Well Medical Center
1964 11 Mile Rd,
Berkley, MI 48072
248-544-9300

Osborn Family Medical Clinic
13560 East McNichols Rd,
Detroit, MI 48205
248 544-9300

Community Health Awareness Group
1300 West Fort St.,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-963-3434 x118

Liv Well Clinic
5103 West Pierson St.
Flint, MI 48504
810-21-0605

Dr. Benson and Dr. Bornstein

PRIDE SOURCE MEDIA GROUP
www.pridesource.com
Phone 734-263-1476

PUBLISHER
Benjamin Jenkins
benjamin@pridesource.com

EDITORIAL
Editorial Director
Chris Azzopardi
chris@pridesource.com

Managing Editor
Sarah Bricker Hunt
sarah@pridesource.com

Graphic Designer
Sarah Wolf
sarah@merithot.com

Contributing Writers
Brians Wells
Elle Warren
Kelli Dunham

Contributing Photographers
Andrew Potter
Megan Hannon
Joanna Grace

ADVERTISING & SALES

Carolyn Cardenas, 734-263-1476
carolyn@pridesource.com

Tim Powers, 734-263-1475
tim@pridesource.com

National Advertising Representative
Rivendell Media, 212-242-6863

MEMBER OF
Michigan Press Assoication
National LGBT Media Association
National Gay & Lesbian Chamber
Q Syndicate

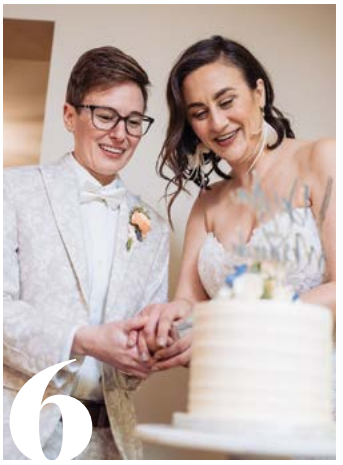
Pride Source

Follow us @Pridesource

Email your op-eds to editor@pridesource.com

Sign up online to receive our E-Digest

WHAT'S INSIDE



6

When Love Won't Wait: Why These Michigan Couples Raced to the Altar Post-Election

14

At the Altar of Equality: These Michigan Religious Leaders Vow to Protect Same-Sex Marriage

24

The Fight for Marriage Equality Is Far From Over. A New Book Honors the Long History That Made It Possible.

10 A New Chapter of Love at Detroit's Historic Harmonie Club

12 Beyond Tradition: Wedding Jewelry at Ferndale's Giorgio Conti as Unique as Your Love Story

16 Joy in the Journey: How This Colorado Couple Planned a Destination Wedding in Michigan

23 How I Let Go of the Stress of Whether to Invite MAGA Family Members to My Wedding

30 When Words Become Witness: The Power (and Occasional Pitfalls) of LGBTQ+ Wedding Speeches

35 2025 Equality Vendors: Wedding Directory

PUBLISHER'S MEMO

For the second year, our wedding edition returns in quality glossy format — thanks to all the LGBTQ-affirming organizations and businesses who helped make it happen! This year's collection of stories celebrates the many facets of love within our community and the unique experience of marriage in today's political climate. We're proud to showcase journeys of commitment and joy. Has BTL's magazine format enhanced your reading experience? We'd love your feedback at editor@pridesource.com as we plan future editions.

ON THE COVER

Photography: Megan Hannon
Floral Work: Chelsea Hohn of Wildscape Floral Co.
Wedding Designer: Cornman Farms
Wedding Couple: Zach Martinucci and Jacob Walden

Looking for an intimate celebration in a lush setting with all the essential elements of a larger event? Consider a Cornman Farms Elopement. The Cornman Farms team will coordinate every detail of your special day from ceremony to cake cuttings. As straightforward as a courthouse wedding but with significantly more charm, this package is perfect for couples who want a stress-free planning experience. Discover more at zingermanscornmanfarms.com.

Get the Smart Choice

6.75% APY*

GENIUS HIGH YIELD CHECKING

⊕ Debit Rewards

A Checking Account that Pays nearly $500 a Year!

Make 10 or more debit transactions of at least $5 during the month

Enroll in eStatements

29 Southeast Michigan branches, find more at **genisyscu.org.**

INSURED BY NCUA

*Annual Percentage Yield designated as APY. Subject to change at any time. Paid on balances up to $7,500 each month if requirements met. Balances over $7,500 will earn .05%APY. The earned per year amount shown is calculated by a full year at the maximum $7,500 daily balance. Your results may vary as your daily account balance fluctuates. Transactions that are pending on your account, and have not posted as of the end of the monthly qualification cycle will not count as a qualifying transaction for that cycle.

GENISYS CREDIT UNION

When Love Won't Wait

Andrew Long (left) and Ben Dowd at their wedding ceremony at the Michigan State Capitol on Feb. 28, 2025. Photo: Brian Wells

Why these Michigan couples raced to the altar post-election

By Brian Wells

On a recent cloudy February day, a small crowd gathered on the steps of the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing. They were there to watch Ben Dowd and his fiancé Andrew Long be married.

The two men had been Facebook friends for several years through mutual friends, and after meeting in person and learning more about each other, they formed a relationship. By Jan. 18, they were engaged — within weeks, they were joined together in federally recognized matrimony.

"After our engagement and the rapidly changing political environment causing us to be uncertain of the ability to marry as an option down the road, Andrew and I decided on Tuesday, Feb. 25, to get married on Friday, Feb. 28, on the Capitol steps in Lansing," Dowd told BTL. "This was also where Andrew proposed to me."

The two pulled everything together within a few days and were married surrounded by a small gathering of family and friends.

"I never got [the chance] to get annoyed of calling him my fiancé," Long joked before the ceremony.

On the night of the November election, Deidra and Miranda Taylor watched the results coming in and realized they would not be in their favor. In discussing their future, they had come to an agreement that if the election turned out the way it appeared it was going to, they would get married at the courthouse and

> "So the morning after the election, Deidra noticed I had woken up and the first thing she said to me was 'Baby, we have to get married.'"
>
> — Miranda Taylor, a newlywed from Michigan

have a ceremony at a later time.

"So the morning after the election, Deidra noticed I had woken up and the first thing she said to me was 'Baby, we have to get married,'" Miranda said. "And although it was music to my ears, that's also how I found out Trump won."

They took a few days to lick their wounds before they started looking for a place to get married and trying to understand the process. The couple, who met several years ago working together at a mortgage company based in Detroit, had already planned to get married in 2025, but decided to move their wedding up to ensure their commitment would be recognized.

"We Googled 'Michigan gay-friendly elopements' and came across Zingerman's Cornman Farms in Dexter," Miranda said. "We toured the facility, booked it and we were married on December 11 with 12 of our friends and family in attendance."

Tabitha Mason, managing partner at Zingerman's Cornman Farms, said being a queer-friendly vendor isn't just important — it's who the company is.

"It's not some checkbox or marketing angle; it's about making sure every couple who walks through our doors feels genuinely welcome, respected and celebrated," she said in an email. "Love is love, period. Weddings are about celebrating love, and everyone deserves a space where they feel safe and supported."

Professionals who work in the wedding industry say they've seen an increase in the number of queer couples who are choosing to elope instead of a traditional wedding in the last few months.

Anna Treimer, who owns Wildly Connected Photography, wanted to

Deidra (left) and Miranda Taylor cut the cake at their wedding at Zingerman's Cornman Farms. Courtesy photo

create a business that reflected her own experience by focusing on doing weddings and elopements for queer couples. In recent years, she said she has seen an increase in the number of elopements she photographs compared to the number of traditional weddings.

"I think it allows couples to present more authentically, whether that's how they present or dress, or they want to have a totally different structure of their day," she said. "It's just a lot easier to do that when you're eloping or doing something with only a handful of people."

Treimer also attributes the rise in elopements to the current political climate.

"There is that aspect where more couples are like, 'Oh, OK, maybe this is something that we need to move up and have a different sort of celebration because we're pulling something together a little more quickly out of fear or concern for the future,'" she said.

Liv Lyszyk, a wedding photographer based in Grand Rapids who works closely with the queer community, said she saw the same thing happen the first time Trump was elected.

"Folks are seeing their rights being stripped away and it's important for them to make sure they are legally married while they can," she said.

Lyszyk said she's seen other vendors offering discounted or free services to couples feeling the need to elope for political reasons.

"Even though things are bleak right now, I'm always in awe of the

community," she said. "It has warmed my heart seeing so many folks stepping up and offering to help."

Beyond political reasons, Lyszyk said she has also seen a trend toward smaller weddings or elopements in recent years due to rising costs. At Cornman Farms, Mason added that small "elopement" packages have become their most frequent booking inquiry, though she thinks it's because people aren't giving in to the pressure of having a big wedding.

"I think couples are focusing on what really matters to them and no longer giving in to the pressure of having the type of wedding their parents had," she said. "It's more now about the experience provided for the guests, not the guest count, and that's where we really shine."

Lyszyk said it's important for her to be a queer-friendly wedding photographer to help celebrate and uplift marginalized people.

She said it's not uncommon to hear from clients who appreciate her openness, affirmation and dedication to helping to represent and celebrate them.

"I live my life out and proud and I want my business to be an extension of that," she said.

For Treimer, being a queer-friendly vendor is about being a safe space for people while allowing them to celebrate their relationship.

"I feel passionate about making sure that I can be a safe space for people when they're already having to deal with so much," she said. "Weddings are already so stressful in general. Add on top of that that you might be having to deal with hard family dynamics or having a really rough time finding vendors or even having bad experiences with vendors. So I felt like it was so important to not only be a safe space for couples, but also really focusing on making the space so clear that it's for LGBTQ couples."

Deidra and Miranda both said when they were searching for a wedding facility, it felt validating to find so many queer-friendly vendors.

"It's extremely validating and it's also important for me because we cannot only vote with our ballot, but we can vote with our money," Miranda said. "For me it's not only helped me feel safe and accepted and supported but also making sure that my money is going towards companies that are in alignment with human rights."

In the end, the couple said they had no regrets about moving their wedding date and eloping.

"We didn't want him to win but we try to also think of some positives," Deidra said. "It did push us to get married and we're grateful that we could."

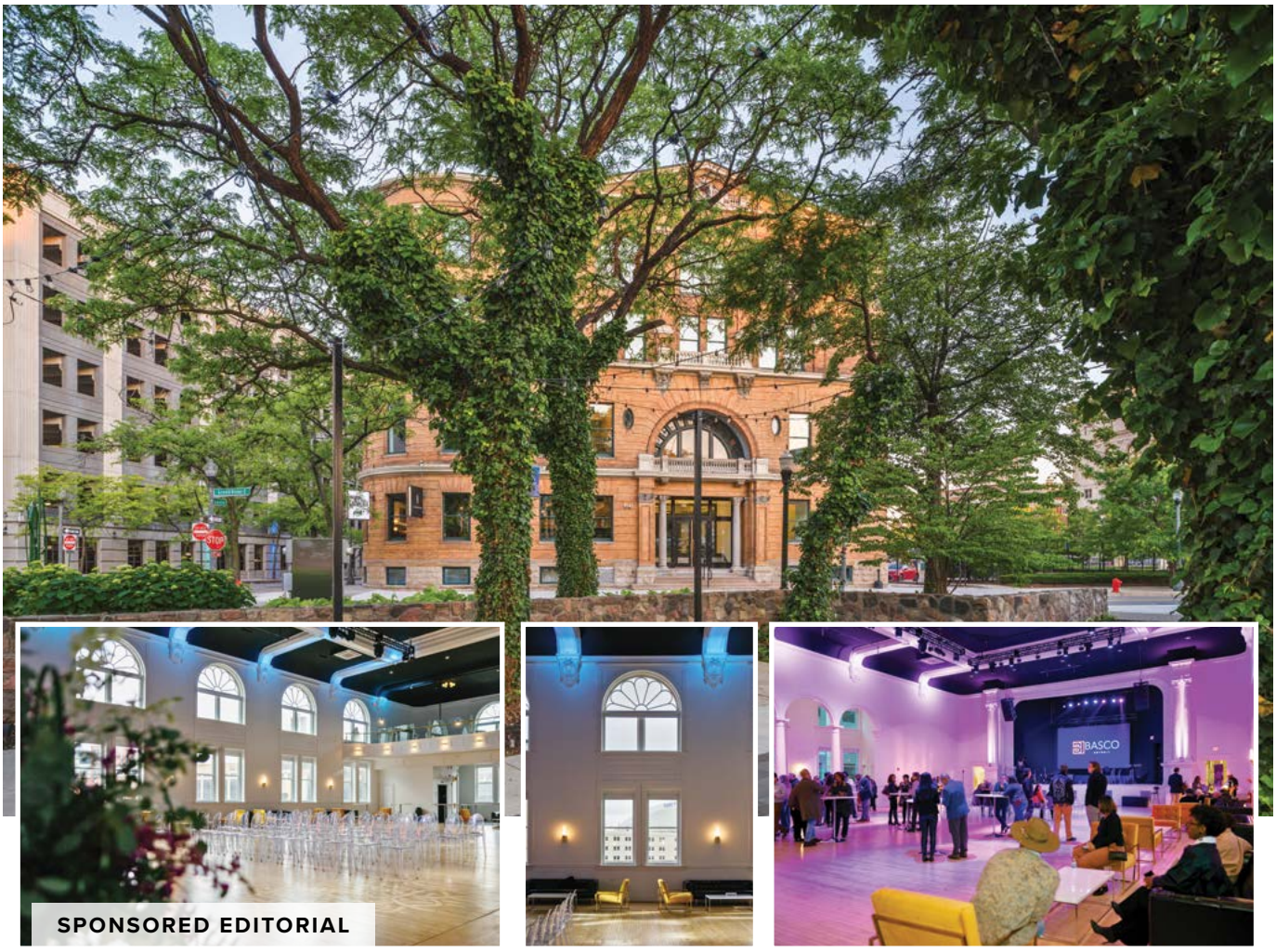
Ben Dowd said he and his partner — now Andrew Dowd — said they had no regrets either.

"It has been important to us to be mindful of how we navigate the future and in order to protect ourselves and the life we are building together, we both understand this needed to happen now while it is still a legal option," he said. "We hope that we will continue to exist, but we are not certain of anything within this current political climate."

The urgency driving these marriages reflects legitimate legal concerns. Justice Clarence Thomas has explicitly signaled he wants the Court to reconsider Obergefell v. Hodges, the 2015 Supreme Court decision that established marriage equality as a constitutional right. In his concurring opinion when Roe v. Wade was overturned, Thomas suggested the Court should revisit other precedents, including same-sex marriage protections.

Adding to these concerns, several Michigan state representatives have urged the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn Obergefell altogether. While the 2022 Respect for Marriage Act provides some federal protections, it would not prevent states from refusing to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples if Obergefell falls.

As Michigan's LGBTQ+ community watches these developments with growing alarm, their rush to formalize relationships isn't just emotional — it's strategic. Wedding vendors across the state are bearing witness to a community that refuses to leave its future to chance, choosing instead to secure whatever legal protections remain available while they still can.



SPONSORED EDITORIAL

Exterior and interior photos of Harmonie Club (267 East Grand River Ave., Detroit). Courtesy photos

A New Chapter of Love at Detroit's Historic Harmonie Club

Downtown landmark strikes a new chord for inclusive weddings and events

By Sarah Bricker Hunt

In the heart of Detroit, where the city's past and future converge, stands the magnificent Harmonie Club — a testament to the Motor City's rich cultural tapestry and resilient spirit. The stunning Beaux Arts building, with its distinctive buff-colored brick and classical detailing, has been a silent witness to over 125 years of Detroit's evolving story. Today, as the meticulously restored venue begins an exciting new chapter, it extends a special invitation to the LGBTQ+ community: Come create your own history within these storied walls.

Detroit's cultural cornerstone

The Harmonie Club's roots run deep in Detroit soil, beginning in 1849 when German immigrants formed the Gesang-Verein Harmonie, a society dedicated to preserving and celebrating German music traditions. As Detroit transformed from a frontier town into an industrial powerhouse, the German community flourished alongside it, eventually constructing the current building in 1895 — during the same era when Detroit was establishing itself as a manufacturing hub.

"I love learning about the history of the building. We recently discovered a lot about the community who built it, how they enjoyed and used the space and how it became the hub of their community,"

says Harmonie Club General Manager Julie Palmer. "The German community loved to sing together. We found songbooks in historical archives and detailed schedules of festivals all over the country where they performed."

This musical heritage remained a cornerstone of Detroit's cultural identity through the decades. After the German social club sold the building in 1974, the space continued to serve artistic purposes intermittently, despite changing ownership multiple times.

Rising with Detroit

Eventually, the building fell into severe disrepair — the roof caving in, walls structurally unsound and deterioration widespread. Its condition reflected the challenges Detroit faced during decades of economic struggle.

But just as Detroit has found new life through preserving its authentic character while embracing innovation, Harmonie Club found its champion in developer and owner/CEO Roger Basmajian of Basco, one of Detroit and Michigan's leading real estate investment and development companies. As a proud member of the LGBTQ+ community and a dedicated advocate who has devoted substantial resources to LGBTQ+ causes and charities, Roger saw beauty and potential where others saw only decay.

"Roger said, 'OK, I can see the vision,'" Palmer explains. "He has a particularly beautiful heart and vision for the restorative potential of saving something that has beautiful original architecture, something that was exquisite in its heyday and being able to bring something back to life."

Harmonie Club's restoration stands in contrast to much of the redevelopment happening around Detroit. "We are surrounded by construction right now, and a lot of it is starting from scratch, tearing down and building new. Basco has shown the whole city and the other developers that there's a way to be successful while saving what Detroit created."

A venue of grandeur and history

The restored venue offers multiple stunning spaces across four floors, each with its own distinctive character while maintaining the building's historic integrity: Guests are welcomed into the space into an expansive foyer featuring a grand, immaculately restored staircase. This level features multiple well-appointed gathering spaces, highlighted by the main reception area with original mosaic tile flooring and impressive wood paneling.

Ascending to the second-floor Raseman Hall, visitors find expansive arched windows, stately columns and a collection of private breakout rooms, bridal suites and meeting spaces perfect for intimate gatherings.

The crown jewel is the third-floor Grand Ballroom, which boasts three towering column archways and the historic grand stage framed by original columns with intricate details. Arched windows offer panoramic views of the Detroit Athletic Club, Comerica Park and downtown Detroit. This space accommodates up to 500 guests for a seated dinner.

The fourth-floor Mezzanine overlooks the Grand Ballroom, providing extra seating and an impressive view. An enclosed glass balcony ensures unobstructed views, while additional arched windows provide glimpses of downtown.

The lower level features Enomah, a high-end Asian-fusion restaurant and bar with craft cocktails and live entertainment that opened earlier this year in what was originally the main parlor and gathering spot that once included a bowling alley and cigar lounge.

An invitation to create new legacies

Today, as Detroit continues writing its comeback story, the Harmonie Club regularly hosts LGBTQ+ celebrations as part of its commitment to inclusivity. The venue provides an affirming space for couples seeking not just a beautiful setting for their wedding, but a place where their love is respected and celebrated.

For Palmer, providing an affirming space for the LGBTQ+ community in this historic venue is both professional and deeply personal. "I'm excited for the opportunity to bring more LGBTQ+ private events and weddings to the Harmonie Club because it's a safe space and it's a beautiful space, and that's what I would love to see as a part of our portfolio as we move forward," Palmer says.

A future-focused venue rooted in Detroit's identity

The Harmonie Club isn't just preserving history — it's creating a living connection between Detroit's storied past and its vibrant future.

"As we look to the future, it's important to us to be a place where the city recognizes itself when it walks through the doors," Palmer says. "It's important that we are integrated with the arts in all the ways art is expressed. We are not only a place where beautiful private events can happen. The Harmonie Club is where the community gathers."

As Detroit continues its journey of transformation, the Harmonie Club stands as a meaningful intersection of past and future. LGBTQ+ couples celebrating their unions here join a lineage of community gatherings that have filled these rooms for generations. There's something profound about exchanging vows in a space where the echoes of Detroit's cultural history still resonate — where the walls have witnessed over a century of music, community and celebration. In this historic setting, new love stories become woven into the continuing narrative of both this architectural treasure and the resilient city that surrounds it.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Harmonie Club. Learn more about LGBTQ-affirming Harmonie Club at harmonieclubdetroit.com. Contact General Manager Julie Palmer at (313) 701-3084 to arrange a tour.

Beyond Tradition

SPONSORED EDITORIAL

Newlyweds Drew and Dorian Grey. Courtesy photo

Wedding jewelry at Ferndale's Giorgio Conti as unique as your love story

By Sarah Bricker Hunt

In the realm of wedding planning, jewelry selection stands as one of the most personal and enduring choices couples make. For LGBTQ+ couples, this process offers a unique opportunity to break from convention and create pieces that truly reflect their relationship, identities — and their love story.

At Giorgio Conti in Ferndale, Joseph Shihadeh, owner and member of the LGBTQ+ community, has built a reputation for creating a welcoming space where couples can explore their options without pressure or preconceptions.

"I've always believed jewelry should be as unique as the relationship it symbolizes," says Shihadeh. "When LGBTQ+ couples walk through our doors, they aren't forced into traditional boxes. We start with their story and build from there."

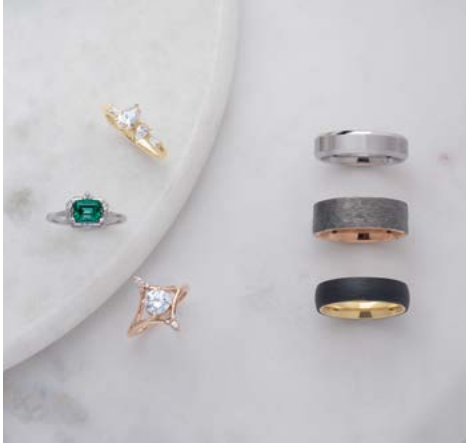
Since moving to Ferndale in early 2024, Giorgio Conti, a family-owned business with a 40-year history in the region, has quickly established itself as more than just a jewelry store — Shihadeh has been intentional about being a good community partner. The store has sponsored the annual Affirmations benefit gala, Ferndale Pride, hosted Pride parties, and co-chairs and sponsors the CARE Night Gala, an event benefiting CARE House in Oakland County, a non-profit serving children in need. This community-centered approach extends naturally from Shihadeh's business philosophy, which centers on ensuring clients feel comfortable, respected and engaged in the jewelry selection process.

For many LGBTQ+ couples, jewelry shopping can trigger anxiety about potential awkwardness or discrimination. Giorgio Conti has built its reputation on creating a genuinely inclusive environment where every couple receives the same enthusiastic service. The store's approach involves private consultations where couples can explore options in a pressure-free environment. For couples who want to invest in something truly unique, on-site artisans can create custom pieces inside the store's workshop.

"The jewelry industry has historically been very traditional in how it approaches couples," Shihadeh explains. "We've deliberately built a different model. When couples visit us, there's no assumption about who's wearing what or which traditional role anyone fills. We simply listen and help translate their vision into something tangible."

Redefining engagement traditions: Custom pieces that tell your story

While traditional engagement scenarios often follow predictable scripts, Shihadeh notes that many LGBTQ+ couples today are writing their own rules. Men's engagement rings have seen a significant rise in popularity, for example, with couples embracing designs that range from subtle



Fine jewelry selections at Giorgio Conti. Courtesy photos

to statement-making. Still, other couples continue opting for traditional, timeless styles — it's all about what feels right for each couple.

Giorgio Conti's in-house artisans specialize in translating personal stories into wearable art. From incorporating significant dates in Morse code along a band's interior to setting stones that represent meaningful locations, the possibilities can extend far beyond the traditional solitaire.

Custom pieces often incorporate elements from a couple's journey together. Engagement bands might feature tiny gemstones representing significant locations, like sapphires symbolizing a lake where couples first met. Some couples include constellation engravings matching the night sky from a memorable evening. Using family heirloom jewelry as a starting point is another popular approach. These personalized details transform jewelry from mere accessories into profound storytellers, carrying the couple's shared history in every facet and curve.

"Jewelry can tell your unique story," Shihadeh explains. "When couples bring their personal narrative to the design process, what we create together becomes a daily reminder of not just their commitment, but the journey that brought them to this moment."

While personal significance remains paramount, several trends have emerged in LGBTQ+ wedding jewelry:

Mixed metals have gained popularity, with couples embracing combinations of white, yellow and rose gold in single pieces or as complementary sets.

Colored gemstones continue to replace or accompany diamonds, allowing for more personalization and often providing ethical sourcing options.

Asymmetry and intentional "imperfections" reflect the organic nature of relationships, with hand-hammered textures and natural stone inclusions celebrated rather than hidden.

Vintage pieces are always on-trend, as well, including family heirloom pieces and unique jewelry the store brings in from various sources. These timeless treasures not only carry rich histories and craftsmanship rarely found in modern production, but they also offer LGBTQ+ couples the opportunity to redefine traditional symbols through pieces that reflect their personal style and shared journey.

"The most significant trend I've observed is the move toward authenticity," says Shihadeh. "Couples are less concerned with what wedding jewelry 'should' look like and more focused on what feels genuine to them. That's where the magic happens."

Beyond engagement rings: The rise of couples' gifts

Many LGBTQ+ couples have embraced exchanging significant jewelry gifts alongside or instead of rings. These pieces — watches, bracelets, necklaces or custom creations — serve as daily reminders of commitment while allowing individual expression.

"We're seeing more couples select pieces that complement each other without necessarily matching," says Shihadeh. "It might be watches with complementary designs but different details, or necklaces that create a whole when brought together." Shihadeh notes a growing trend in brooches, particularly vintage and estate pieces for men, which have become popular as couples' gifts. The store's recent "brooch party" featured both new designs and one-of-a-kind estate selections, which proved especially appealing to their clientele.

"Our wedding in Lake Como was magical, and the jewelry we got from Giorgio Conti Jewelers in Ferndale made it even more meaningful," recently married couple Drew and Dorian Grey said. "The rings and gifts were exactly what we wanted — truly a beautiful experience!"

Giorgio Conti's design team works closely with couples to understand their style preferences, creating pieces that work beautifully on their own while forming a cohesive story when viewed together.

Beginning your jewelry journey

For couples beginning their wedding jewelry search, Shihadeh offers this advice: "Start with what matters to you, not necessarily what tradition dictates. Our happiest couples are those who bring their full selves to the process to either create something custom or to select more traditional, timeless pieces that feel right to them."

Giorgio Conti welcomes appointments for consultations where couples can explore options without obligation. The store's artisan jewelry makers, who are based in Giorgi Conti's in-house Ferndale workshop, can start with existing heirloom pieces, ethically sourced new materials or combinations of both.

"At the end of the day," Shihadeh says, "wedding jewelry should bring joy — both in the choosing and in the wearing. When you look down at your hand or see your partner wearing their piece, you should feel your shared story reflected back at you. That's our ultimate goal for every couple we serve."

This content is made possible through our partnership with Giorgio Conti Jewelers. Learn more about this LGBTQ-owned Ferndale business at www.gconti.com.

At the Altar of Equality

Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow. Photo: Andrew Potter

These Michigan religious leaders vow to protect same-sex marriage

By Bridgette M. Redman

When Kent and Diego Love-Ramirez exchanged vows at the MSU Alumni Chapel in 2007, their ceremony wasn't legally recognized by the state of Michigan, but it was sanctified by something far more enduring — their faith. Standing before family, friends and their pastor, they made promises that transcended legal documents.

"Our faith is deeply tied to our connections with our family," Diego told BTL. "Both Kent and I had our sisters as members of our wedding party standing with us and our parents both walking us down the aisle."

Today, such ceremonies aren't just acts of faith but legal unions, thanks to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court Obergefell decision that affirming congregations across Michigan have embraced for nearly a decade. In sanctuaries from Detroit to Midland, clergy have proudly officiated LGBTQ+ weddings, weaving together religious traditions with the newly won legal rights of same-sex couples.

But as legislative threats to marriage

equality resurface across the country, Michigan's affirming religious leaders aren't backing down. Instead, they're doubling down on their commitments to love, inclusion and the sacred right of all couples to marry in the faith communities that nurture them.

In February, Michigan State Rep. Josh Schriver (R-Oxford) introduced a resolution calling upon the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn its 2015 decision. While the speaker of the house killed the resolution, it echoed other GOP lawmakers around the country.

Bishop Bonnie A. Perry, the bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, dismissed Schriver's actions as political theater designed to frighten people.

"Same-sex marriage has been the law of the land for more than a decade," Perry said. "The vast majority of Americans support it and I'm certainly not going to change any of our practices, except to become even more vocal and to be very clear that in the Episcopal Church, we welcome all and we are a place of compassion, inclusion, care and justice. If people want to make lifelong, monogamous commitments, then we're here to support that, because that just builds up all families."

When Kent and Diego held their wedding ceremony, they "were very fortunate that we had a pastor who we knew well preside over our ceremony," said Diego.

Rev. Roger Pancost leads the United Church of Christ Midland, a congregation that has been openly affirming for 20 years. They once shared their sanctuary with a branch of the Metropolitan Community Church, an organization committed to providing a safe space for LGBTQ+ people. That association inspired them to officially undergo the two-year UCC process of becoming an affirming church, which they did in 2004.

"I started here before marriage equality became the law of the land, but it was already known in the area that we were a welcoming church," Pancost said. "On a semi-regular basis, I was getting phone calls from same-gender couples wanting weddings that weren't legal by the state but were blessed by the church. I did many commitment services."

After Obergefell, the church regularly held ceremonies at the end of worship services where the entire congregation could support couples as they made legal what was already real.

Pancost said nothing is going to stop them from continuing to perform same-sex marriages, even if the courts change their rulings.

"What I do find is that it brings a different level of pastoral care," Pancost said. "Some of our same-gender couples are very concerned about what's going on in the larger society as far as wanting to revoke this right they've had for a decade now. I find I just need to be supportive of people."

Rev. Dr. Roland Stringfellow, senior pastor and teacher at the Metropolitan Community Church – Detroit, said the current political climate has many people justifiably concerned.

"We are now seeing all sorts of protocols and norms being broken and things that we thought were never going to happen are happening," Stringfellow said. "There is a genuine concern that they are targeting people who are in same-sex marriages. Could we lose our tax status or some of the things we have come to take for granted?"

He stresses that all rights are intertwined and the large target on the back of trans people is something the entire community needs to be concerned about. Also, Stringfellow points out, racism is back in vogue and being legalized.

"Marriage is definitely a part of it, and the difference between now and then when we were fighting for marriage is that we weren't also trying to fight for our people," Stringfellow said. "That dystopian image from the television show 'The Handmaid's Tale' where the main character, June, tries to get cash out and her ATM doesn't work anymore: We're in a place now where it's leaning in that direction for the LGBTQ [community] — particularly trans [people] — and people of color and women."

Stringfellow said same-sex marriages are at risk because people are using fascist, Christian nationalist ideology to justify coming after those they oppose. It's something, he said, that has been in the works for 40 years and goes far beyond Donald Trump or Elon Musk. Stringfellow drew connections between James Dobson, Jerry Falwell and white supremacy.

"That is what we're seeing being played out now," Stringfellow said. "There seems to be so many who adhere to that type of theology that is so

See **Wedding Officiants**, page 20

JOY IN THE JOURNEY

How This Colorado Couple Planned a Destination Wedding in Michigan

Images from Zach Martinucci and Jacob Walden's wedding at Zingerman's Cornman Farms. Photos: Megan Hannon

And how Zingerman's Cornman Farms helped love find a perfect setting

By Sarah Bricker Hunt

When Zach Martinucci and Jacob Walden chose Zingerman's Cornman Farms for their August 2024 wedding, they weren't just selecting a beautiful venue — they were choosing peace of mind. The Denver-based couple wanted a celebration where they could be fully present rather than stressed about planning details.

"Our priority was that it would be exceptional and beautiful and that everything would be taken care of," explains Martinucci, a professional baker who owns a bakery in Colorado. "We had the exact low-key, beautiful Monday morning lunch wedding that we wanted."

The happy couple's event, which drew guests from all over the country to the venue's Dexter location near Ann Arbor, exemplifies what Tabitha Mason, managing partner at Cornman Farms, believes weddings should be: "The most memorable celebrations are those where guests walk away feeling like they've experienced something that truly represents the couple," she tells BTL.

A welcoming space for every love story

Before selecting decorations or planning ceremony details, Mason suggests reflecting on which elements of your relationship you want to showcase. "Consider the moments that define your relationship," she says. "Think about how you met, your shared passions or the cultural traditions that matter to you."

Planning a Michigan wedding from their home in Colorado added a potentially stressful dimension to the couple's experience — it also meant convincing loved ones that the Ann Arbor area near Walden's grad school alma mater, the University of Michigan, was a worthwhile spot for a destination wedding. "It was definitely some propaganda to convince everyone Michigan's a good place for a wedding," Martinucci jokes. "Ultimately, of course, everyone absolutely loved it and we were so excited to share Michigan with them."

At Cornman Farms, with its charming historic farmhouse, restored 1800s red barn, sweeping grounds and multiple outdoor spaces, couples find not just a beautiful venue but a team dedicated to creating a stress-free, joyful experience. The warmth and genuine care of the staff is something couples consistently highlight.

"Tabitha was very generous, very kind and accommodating," says Walden. "She wasn't the coordinator — she had other things going on — but even so, she made a point to check in with us and see how things were going."

Cornman Farms exemplifies how a venue can create a truly affirming environment for LGBTQ+ couples. "We welcome all couples of the LGBTQ+ community to celebrate their devotion to each other," Mason emphasizes. "Our entire team and preferred vendor network has committed to creating a safe and welcoming place for couples of all genders, sexes, races and ethnicities." This commitment is formalized through inclusion agreements that all staff and preferred vendors must sign, ensuring every professional involved in the celebration is a genuine ally.

Martinucci and Walden found creative ways to make their celebration meaningful, including a "family moon" after the wedding. "Both families went on a vacation afterward to Saugatuck," Martinucci explains. Walden adds, "Convincing the Californians that there is a swimmable inland sea in Michigan was part of it. But they were totally blown away."

Food and thoughtful design elements offer powerful ways to share your story with guests. As a baker and culinary anthropologist, Martinucci naturally placed special emphasis on the menu. "Food, of course, was the number one priority," he says. "We were very impressed. I thought everything was the best of the best."

Distinctive floral arrangements also helped the couple personalize their ceremony. "We had a flower circle on the ground when we got married," Martinucci shares. "It was just something

The menu featured fresh, inventive choices. Photo: Megan Hannon

> "We didn't want to have to plan a huge party. We really wanted to enjoy it ourselves as guests."
>
> — Zach Martinucci, a newlywed

I'd emailed the florist (Chelsea Hohn of Wildscape Floral Co.) about and she was down for anything. She made it all look exceptional."

Venue packages can offer freedom from decision paralysis

Over the past several years, venues like Cornman Farms have begun offering more options for couples that package together curated sets of vendors, suppliers and services. Couples still have opportunities to make decisions along the way but free from the burden of coordinating these amenities on their own.

"We didn't want to have to plan a huge party," Martinucci continues. "We really wanted to enjoy it ourselves as guests."

Walden appreciates how the venue saved them from vendor decision paralysis. "We don't live in Michigan. We didn't want to find our own vendors," he notes. "Even if we were local, we probably wouldn't have been able to find as great of choices as Cornman Farms did on our behalf."

The photographer, Megan Hannon, was one such standout vendor. "We talk about Megan all the time as an example of one of the many choices where we didn't have to do the level of vetting and calling dozens of people," Walden says. "All the recommendations were excellent."

This thoughtful curation extends to every aspect of the experience. "We were also just excited to see what they were going to plan for us," Martinucci shares. "They did a really incredible job."

The contrast became clear later. "We're planning an anniversary party now as a local reception essentially a year later," Martinucci reflects. "I'm realizing more just in retrospect how easy Cornman Farms made the process for us for what can be a really stressful day for people."

The most meaningful weddings create celebrations that authentically reflect who you are as a couple — both on your wedding day and in the life you're building together. At Cornman Farms, Tabitha Mason and her warm, attentive team ensure that the process itself becomes part of the joy, not the stress, of beginning that journey.

This content is made possible through our partnership with Zingerman's Cornman Farms. Nestled just outside Ann Arbor in Dexter, Zingerman's Cornman Farms offers an LGBTQ-affirming venue with versatile indoor and outdoor spaces for unforgettable celebrations. Explore more at zingermanscornmanfarms.com.

MERITHOT

CREATE
SOMETHING
EXTRAORDINARY.

Merithot helps awesome companies create remarkable brands, strategies, websites and content.

Creative Marketing made with ♥ from Ann Arbor, MI | www.merithot.com

CELEBRATE
YOUR WEDDING
IN A SPACE AS
VIBRANT AS
YOUR LOVE.

MATTHAEI BOTANICAL GARDENS
ANN ARBOR, MI

(Left to right) Bishop Bonnie A. Perry; Kent and Diego Love-Ramirez and son at their 2012 legal ceremony in Washington, D.C.; Kent and Diego at their 2007 commitment ceremony. Courtesy photos

Wedding Officiants

Continued from page 15

warped and twisted. ...They've gotten into bed with Republican operatives to create what we see now. This is not just about religion. It's about power and control."

Stringfellow said that during the Civil Rights era, some Black clergy stayed out of the fight, insisting it safer to keep their heads down and stay out of trouble.

"For myself, being an out gay pastor, that has never been my call," Stringfellow said. "Once I knew that God had accepted and loved me, that gave me a boldness to stand on the street corner and to stand up for immigrant rights and trans rights and water justice and the like. One of my joys of being a pastor is helping reconnect people with the God who they thought despised them and let them know that it's so far from the truth. They have been beautifully and wonderfully made in God's image. You're not a mistake."

Raised in the Catholic Church, Kent and Diego said they were surrounded by loving and supportive people, including affirming priests. It was only when the Catholic church became loudly vocal in its opposition to same-sex marriage that they left the church. Even so, they held on to the faith that was important to them and it was reflected in their wedding.

"We structured it on what would be considered a traditional ceremony, but we made it our own," Kent said. "We did have Bible readings. We lit a unity candle, which is traditional in faith-based services. We even had a priest who took us through the traditional pre-marriage counseling prior to the ceremony. We wanted it to be as close to what we would have been able to do had we been married in the Catholic Church."

Kent and Diego said they've been having a lot of candid conversations with their support network and age-appropriate ones with their 10- and 14-year-old children.

"We have been letting them know that if they're hearing things regarding our legal marriage being threatened, that we're always a family no matter what and that wouldn't change," Kent said.

They moved to Minneapolis so that their marriage would be legal, moving back to Michigan only after Obergefell. They said they don't know what they will do if it gets overturned and Michigan goes back to the constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

"We hope that day doesn't come, especially as our family has put down roots and has a beautiful network of family and friends," Kent said. "But our family is first, so we'll do whatever we need to do to protect us."

Diego said the nagging question about whether their relationship will be invalidated legally engenders an emotional response. The debates are insulting.

"Our relationship has been founded on some very true ideals that are very dear to both of us," Diego said. "Our history together has outlasted many, many relationships in our lives. We are raising two boys who are very well-adjusted and it is somewhat exasperating to have these things put in question time and time again. Through the way we live our lives, we've shown that we've lived by our values and we see that in our

children as well."

Bishop Perry is a member of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's LGBTQ+ Commission. At a recent meeting they were discussing the attacks on same-sex marriage, characterizing it as "bigoted, cruel political theater that is meant to stir up fear and division. It's part of a broader agenda to strip LGBTQ+ folks of our fundamental rights. It's about a group of people's desire to create division and fear, and to put people on the outside — and that is fundamentally anti-Christian. It also strikes me as falling way short on a moral compass, but particularly in Christianity."

Despite a challenging political climate, Perry warns against rushing into a marriage out of fear. She and her wife have been together for 36 years and she stresses that marriage is hard work.

"Don't jump into a marriage because you're afraid you're going to lose the right unless you're up for a lifelong, monogamous commitment," Perry said. "Getting married because you're afraid — that's not the point. We get married because we're in love and we understand that a lifelong, intimate relationship is amazing and takes a lot of work."

Perry, who had a hope and love blessing ceremony with her wife before same-sex marriage was legal, said that the blessing of a community provides invaluable support for those getting married.

"The thing I say to all couples, queer or not, it's not about the wedding," Perry said. "It's about the marriage. The wedding will be fun, but it's about the day in and the day out. And it takes more than what we see in the average rom-com, but it gives more than we are ever going to see on the big screen."

Harmonie Club
Established 1895

Learn More!
313-701-3084
@harmonieclubdetroit

Elle Warren (left) with her wife on their wedding day. Photo: Joanna Grace

How I Let Go of the Stress of Whether to Invite MAGA Family Members to My Wedding

Choosing who to invite based on their support for your love

By Elle Warren

A few months before my wedding, I was on a FaceTime call with my sister. We'd been talking about wedding planning, and my responses were short and shut down. I said through tears, "I want to celebrate with everyone. I'm just not sure that they want to celebrate with me."

Among my 14 first cousins and three siblings, I'm the youngest and the quintessential "gay cousin." They watched me grow up, and I watched most of them get married, buy homes and start families. While I didn't come out to myself or anyone else until I was 22, there'd long been a part of me that struggled to see myself in the futures they'd arrived at.

A few months before that FaceTime call, as we were finalizing the invitations and our wedding website, I'd mused to my fiancé that perhaps we should put a disclaimer somewhere: Please don't come if you wouldn't vote to protect our rights. I was only half-joking. No one in my family had denounced me or our love to my face, but based on some questionable-to-downright-objectionable Facebook posts and red attire, I could be reasonably certain that a handful of family members did not "agree" with it — on principle or in law.

If pressed, I imagined they'd say they loved us — just not our "lifestyle," something like that. I wanted to shield myself from this kind of love. My fiancé understood where I was coming from with the disclaimer, but she was adamant that she didn't want our wedding itself to be a political act — not any more that it inherently was. She wanted it to be about nothing but our commitment to and adoration of one another.

Yet I couldn't stop thinking about the lens through which some family members and family friends might see us. Not only would our wedding be the first queer wedding for many of them, I knew some of them probably didn't know any queer people at all. I couldn't help but imagine the disdain or disgust, even if subconscious, some might look at us with. Despite the facts — the majority of my

See **Guest List**, page 34

Serving the Real Estate Needs of Michigan's LGBT Community for 30 Years!
Real Estate One
Lynn L. Stange
Full Service Realtor
Buyer's & Listing Agent
6689 Vernmoor, Troy, MI 48098
FOR SALE
"There really is a difference!"
Phone: 248-561-6967
Email: LLStange@aol.com

Demonstrators rally for marriage rights. Courtesy photo

The Fight for Marriage Equality Is Far From Over. A New Book Honors the Long History That Made It Possible.

'Love: The Heroic Story of Marriage Equality' is a reminder of the power of advocacy and visibility

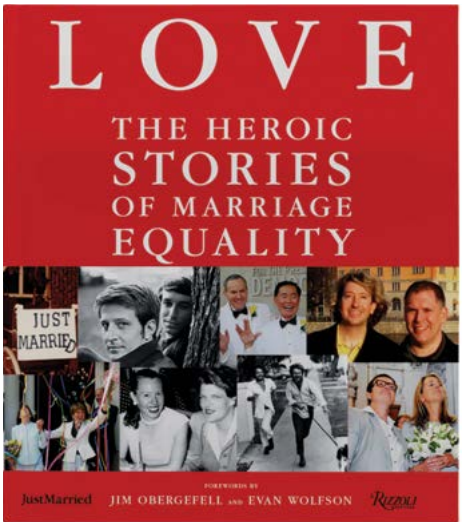
By Chris Azzopardi

In a time when LGBTQ+ rights are under constant threat, "Love: The Heroic Story of Marriage Equality" arrives as both a powerful reminder and a call to action. This compelling new book, rich in storytelling and archival photographs, is an emotional journey through the fierce and often painful fight for marriage equality, spotlighting the everyday people whose courage changed history. As current political forces jeopardize hard-won rights, it's not just a timely celebration of what has been achieved, but a stark warning of what could be lost.

By weaving together deeply personal stories beginning in the pre-1970s eras when gay couples were nearly invisible, "Love" uncovers the unsung heroes who became the driving force behind the movement — from the early couples who demanded their right to marry to those who continue to battle for full equality today.

The project, which author and photographer Frankie Frankeny has been working on since the first same-sex marriage took place in 2004 in Massachusetts, has evolved into a powerful testament to resilience and change, shaped by key LGBTQ+ figures: Jim Obergefell, whose name became forever linked to marriage equality through the Obergefell v. Hodges case, which played a crucial role in the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide; Frankeny, a prolific food photographer and director who has produced numerous award-winning books; Evan Wolfson, founder and leader of Freedom to Marry, the campaign that won marriage in the U.S.; and John Casey, senior editor and writer of The Advocate, who helped capture the stories in "Love" for posterity.

Initially envisioned as a documentary,



(Left) Pete and Chasten Buttigieg on their wedding day, as featured in the new book "Love: The Heroic Stories of Marriage Equality." Courtesy photos

the project evolved into a book, podcast and next, a potential documentary series. Frankeny says she always saw this as an opportunity to change public perception, not just about marriage but about the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. The book was supposed to be published sooner, but the universe had a different, and perhaps a more timely, plan.

"I feel like it's coming out exactly at the time our community needs it the most," Frankeny said, recognizing how much of a difference these stories can make in today's sociopolitical climate. "When people are really listening."

How did the concept for the book start?

Frankie Frankeny: I started advocating for marriage equality in 2004 when Hillary and Julie Goodridge won in Massachusetts. But at that same time, my friends were having their joyous wedding licenses revoked, and it was really devastating to all of them. I started to realize how important these stories were going to be in changing the way people really thought about us — not just being married, but all across the board. I started really thinking of it as a documentary. And then certain people said, "You do book publishing, it should be a book too."

It's been 20 years now, collecting these stories. And so over time, it turned into this project, which is the book and a serialized podcast that's coming out that goes deeper into each of the stories. And now we're pitching the docuseries. One of the executive producers cried [during the pitch].

Jim, have you felt the impact of your work for marriage equality in your everyday life?

Jim Obergefell: I've certainly been stopped on the street, in airports, on airplanes. I still think one of the strangest was I was in Columbus, Ohio with a friend. We were parking and there was this pickup truck doing all these weird maneuvers and it parked across the street from us illegally. And as we get out, the guy driving was motioning toward us. We're like, what's going on here? And he gets out of the car and comes across the street and introduces himself and says, "Thank you, Jim. Because of you, I was able to get my green card to stay with my husband here in the U.S."

John, you documented and wrote some of the stories about these heroes in the book. How do you think they resonate differently now, in this political environment?

John Casey: I think the thread here is this: Everyone I talked to was a fighter, and they didn't start out to be a fighter, but they ended up being a fighter. That's the lesson in the people that I've talked to: Through this journey, they never gave up. And that lesson can be applied today. I think with all of our rights under attack, from military to marriage, to our equal rights or civil rights, the lesson here is the only way you win and get what you want is if you fight. There's no better example than Michael [McConnell] and Jack [Baker], the first gay married couple in the U.S. [in 1971], back when even being gay could put you in jail. I lived through that era, and you could be put in jail. People were creative with finding holes and loopholes within the law. They continued to fight. And they didn't let anything stop them.

Jim, your story with your husband John Arthur, who died from ALS, is deeply personal and played a central role in the movement and, naturally, in the book. As you fought for marriage equality, driven by the urgency of John's terminal illness and your desire to have your love recognized by the law, could you share more about your journey together and reflect on how it has resonated with others over the years?

Obergefell: That experience really made me go, oh, wow, stories really are powerful and change hearts and minds because I lived it firsthand. I mean, I had someone in the Supreme Court shake my hand and thank me for this fight and then tell me that he was an evangelical Republican, but he changed his mind about marriage equality because of John's and my story. Over time, I've had people tell me that marriage equality kept them from committing suicide because it gave them a future.

So it has been an incredibly meaningful

experience for me. John and I, we just wanted to exist. And that wasn't an unusual thing for queer couples. We want to exist in the eyes of our government. And we just were willing to fight, to stand up and to sue for that simple right to exist and be treated with dignity. What I've seen again and again during the case but then after the case is just how important marriage is to people because that relationship is the most important person in the world to them. We deserve that right, the ability to say "I do" to that one person. We deserve the right to form our families and have them be treated equally.

Jim Obergefell. Courtesy photo

I look at this as a celebration. But I also look at it as a motivation to younger generations to know their history, to understand what it took for the positive changes that have happened in this country. But then to understand how vital it is to keep fighting in memory and in gratitude for all of those people who put everything on the line years ago, decades ago. So it's up to all of us to keep fighting to ensure that marriage and all of the rights that we have gained don't go away.

So it has been an incredible experience for me. But it's also really important for me and for everyone to know that my case, our case, the 30 plaintiffs in this case, didn't spring out of nowhere. If it weren't for people like Edie Windsor and so many of these people featured in the book, and without everything that they did, John and I would have never been in a situation where we could sue the state of Ohio, and actually be part of making the world a better place. So, stories are powerful. It's how we change hearts and minds. And like I say, I experienced it firsthand, I know the power of stories.

The other really important thing is young queer people need to know their heroes, they need to know their history. And that's what this project does. It shares history that, for far too long, we were denied. And it gives people hope, because they can say, "Wait, these people went through something really challenging, really hard, really difficult, but they were willing to do it." And that's what our community needs. We need heroes. We need access to our history.

Casey: Jim is an extraordinary person, but Jim began this as an ordinary person, he and John. And I think that's the other thing in this too. You have Ellen [DeGeneres] and Portia [de Rossi], who did a lot for mainstream society. But [others] started out as just ordinary citizens who, when they were faced with the realization that their lives were going to be changed if they couldn't get married or couldn't be the same, stepped up to the plate. I think that's a lesson for today, particularly for this generation. Stepping up and being courageous and speaking out is the only way you affect change. And it's the only way you keep the rights that you've earned.

Obergefell: My experience also illustrates the importance of allies. Our attorney, Al Gerhardstein — brilliant man, but straight man — believed in equality; he believed in us and our rights. So these things don't happen in a vacuum. We need allies, we need people who are willing to stand up for us to speak out on our behalf. And also, allies can pop up in the weirdest of places, like Rick Hodges [the defendant in Obergefell v. Hodges]. We're friends. He was on our side the entire time. So I think that's also another important thing: We can't forget our allies, the people who are willing to be there with us to stand with us and say, "We've got you, we're fighting for you."

Frankeny: You know, so many of these heroes went through something as kids that I feel gave them the fortitude, strength or skills to fight for marriage equality later on in life. Now, every single one of these people had to have the strength to come out. What Jim and John had to go through with the Catholic Church as children and as adults, what Edie Windsor had to go through being called a "dirty Jew." George Takei was put in a concentration camp as a child. Jack Baker of Jack and Michael, his parents died when he was like 6 and he was in an orphanage and he used all the skills he learned then to navigate the fight for marriage equality later on in life.

For most of us, we lived in isolation for the first two decades of our lives, living every single moment hiding who we were, decorating our original souls with whatever it was that made us look more like a straight dude or a straight gal, hiding our true selves.

How do you feel about the state of marriage equality in this current political climate?

Casey: In my job, readers constantly say, "My marriage is in danger, they're coming after my marriage." And so I just had a long conversation with Evan Wolfson for a series of columns I'm going to do about this. He's not worried. He thinks that we're set. Nancy [Pelosi] has told me many times that one of the most consequential things she ever did was to codify marriage. And she was Speaker of the House. Evan's not very worried, neither

It Clicks photographers want to...
save your
date!
EST. 2013
WWW.ITCLICKSPHOTO.COM
Serving Metro Detroit + Beyond

BTL
Between the Lines
PRIDESOURCE
Are You Ready To
Introduce Your Business
to the LGBTQ+ Community?
PRIDESOURCE.COM/ADVERTISE

MEN ON THE MOVE
YOUR MOVING INDUSTRY EXPERTS
Specializing in Local and Long Distance Moving Since 1991
Professional Service
No Minimums
Licensed & Insured
Indoor Storage
Local & Long Distance
Senior Discounts
7 Day Service
Veteran Owned
"Talk about stress free, Men on the Move rocks!"
Referred By ADAM HELFMAN
"Hire it Done"
Hire it Done
Celebrating 32 Years in Business!
Angi Super Service Award 2022
(734) 744-9547
michiganmovers.com
MPSC #L25824 USDOT #623948
ACCREDITED BUSINESS
BBB A+ Rating

Supporting the
Community Since
Before it was Cool.
100% Local Agents. 100% Client Focused.
Trillium Real Estate Helps People
Make Good Decisions.
TRILLIUM
REAL ESTATE
Sandi & Linda
www.trilliumrealtors.com
6689 Vernmoor, Troy, MI 48098
734-302-3011
TRILLIUM
REAL ESTATE

is Nancy Pelosi, but everybody else is.

So when I interviewed all of these people about their marriages, one of my last questions was, "What if the Supreme Court comes along and takes it away?" Every single one was emphatic and said, "They can't. They won't. No, it won't happen. If they do it, it doesn't mean anything to me because I will always be married." And so there is a very strong resistance from those that I talked to who will not accept a Supreme Court ruling. Their marriage is a marriage and it's done. There's no discussion about it. And so that is a heartfelt thing — that's an example for all those other people that are out there that are worrying about their own marriages. These people, not worried at all. Whatever the Supreme Court says, they can go fuck themselves.

Jim, how are you feeling about what's at stake?

Obergefell: I'm not like Evan Wolfson. I do not trust the Supreme Court. This hasn't been precedent for even 10 years yet. They overturned a precedent that was in place for 49 years. We've had Supreme Court justices point blank say, "I want to overturn Obergefell." So yes, marriage is at risk. Now, I can't talk to what would happen. Would they invalidate all existing marriages? I don't know. Would it create a disaster? Absolutely. No question. But John and I refused to have a symbolic ceremony back in the mid '90s because we wanted marriage and everything it stood for. If Obergefell is overturned, if the Respect for Marriage Act were rescinded, which could happen with 60 votes... we wanted marriage that wasn't just symbolic. We wanted those 1,138 rights, protections and privileges. If Obergefell is overturned, if the Respect for Marriage Act is taken away, those 1,138 rights no longer exist.

Frankeny: And it's no longer marriage. Even if they have the White House and they have all the Senate and all Congress, they have to be able to get 60 votes in the Senate. So that seems highly unlikely, but it's not highly unlikely that Obergefell will be overturned at the Supreme Court and marriage goes back to the states, still protecting those who are currently married with their federal rights. But it'll be a mess. Hopefully, these stories will not only show people the beauty that has come from gaining this right, but these stories will hopefully show people absolutely why they need to fight, why we cannot go back.

Casey: We have to be vigilant, we have to keep our eye on the ball, and we have to make sure we're out there fighting, because we still have to fight. Yes, we won, but it's a matter of protecting what we want. And that's the overriding message.

With this threat to marriage equality and, in general, the current risk of just being LGBTQ+, what do you believe is the most important message the book sends at this critical time?

Casey: The younger generation for the last couple of years has been saying, when it comes to Pride Month, "pinkwashing, pinkwashing, pinkwashing." And I remember a time when there were no corporate sponsors and a Pride march was just people holding signs and there weren't floats, OK? I wrote a column that said, pinkwashing, you better watch out, because it's going to be that quick that these corporations can just run away and you don't have it there. And I think that's the implicit message here: Don't take for granted this right that you have. What you have right now can be wiped away because you take your eye off the ball, you become too complacent, and you get too spoiled with what you have. And the lesson that every couple had was, "Fight. Don't take it for granted."

Frankeny: I'm going to ditto what John said — don't be complacent. Complacency isn't an option anymore. We've been here before. It's been worse. Tens of thousands in our community were just dying, their bodies being thrown in the dumpster in the back of a hospital for friends to come pick up and put in a cab to take to the morgue because nobody would bring their bodies. And the president [Ronald Reagan] wouldn't even say the word AIDS. We have been thrown in jail for just being gay. People have been lobotomized. They've had electroshock treatments. It's been bad, but we've told our stories. It's sort of a common belief that marriage equality happened fast for us, but it didn't. It was this process of people coming out, telling their stories and then being able to fall in love, and then being able to fight for marriage equality, most of them, because they felt like they had to. But it's a belief that it happened quickly.

There are gay people in everybody's family, and as more people started to share their stories, more people became comfortable just sharing their stories with their families and more people were coming out. So I think these stories foster understanding and when people understand, they have less fear.

Obergefell: This project is specific to marriage and we can see over the years the people who helped make marriage a reality. But this applies to all rights that the queer community enjoys. They are all at risk. And it's up to us as a community to know our history, to not be complacent, and also to look at it as, "I owe it to the people who came before me to fight to keep the positive changes they made for me a reality."

So, for me, I look at this as a celebration. But I also look at it as a motivation for younger generations to know their history, to understand what it took for the positive changes that have happened in this country. But then to understand how vital it is to keep fighting in memory and in gratitude for all of those people who put everything on the line years ago, decades ago. So it's up to all of us to keep fighting to ensure that marriage and all of the rights that we have gained don't go away. We can only do that by knowing our history and being willing to fight for our history on behalf of those people who made things better for us.

Join the fight against the growing wave of book bans and the erasure of queer history by purchasing a copy of "Love: The Heroic Story of Marriage Equality" for a local library or queer youth center, where they are needed most. Your donation helps to ensure that stories of love, equality and resilience are accessible to all, especially in spaces where these books might otherwise be restricted or banned. Visit justmarried.us/category/supporters for more information.

LEWIS JEWELERS
SINCE 1921
"YOUR DIAMOND STORE"

I Do

DIAMOND SHOWCASE

THURSDAY, MAY 1ST - SATURDAY, MAY 3RD

TACORI MICHAEL M GABRIEL & CO. HEARTS ON FIRE®

Save the Date! We'll See You There!

For three days only, explore an exclusive extended collection of engagement rings, wedding bands, and anniversary bands from the most sought-after designers.

Discover the largest selection in the state and find the ring that tells your love story.

Scan the code to make your exclusive appointment for this event!

300 S Maple Rd., Ann Arbor | 734.994.5111 | **LewisJewelers.com**

When Words Become Witness

The power (and occasional pitfalls) of LGBTQ+ wedding speeches

By Kelli Dunham

Wedding speeches are often the emotional heart of community participation in the reception — an opportunity for loved ones to share their joy, tell the couple's story and offer wisdom for the journey ahead. But at LGBTQ+ weddings, these toasts can carry a unique resonance, often reflecting broader narratives of resilience, chosen family and the power of love in defying expectations.

Last year, a wedding toast video went viral. It featured Kelli Dalton, mother of Colorado bride Maggie Hesketh. She began her speech by waving a Pride flag (not figuratively, but literally waving a small flag) and starting: "This is our family's first gay wedding, but hopefully not our last."

She continued: "The gay agenda is simply to be loved and accepted and even celebrated as is, just like anyone else, without having to change or be changed."

The affirming five-minute speech should have come with a warning: may cause tears. Hundreds of comments responding to the video were mostly from LGBTQ+ people who expressed gratitude for Dalton's vocal support of our community — but also, sadness or regret at not having had her kind of parental support.

The cameras weren't running when Jordan Williams of Ann Arbor got married last year to her partner Alex DeBoer, but Williams had an emotionally similar experience. "I didn't expect my dad to speak at all. But then, he stood up, cleared his throat and said, 'I spent 30 years trying to understand my child. Tonight, I want to thank her for teaching me what love is.'"

"There were many tears," said Williams. "Me. My partner. Our friends. Our family. And to my great surprise, even from my dad. He's a tough Midwestern dude. I don't think I've ever seen him cry."

Metro Detroit clinical social worker and therapist Daniel Horrigan explains why these speeches impact us so deeply: "I think it's about attachment. Cultivating loving, intimate relationships helps us to heal attachment wounds. I think it's fair to say that many queer people have attachment wounds. When we gather for a wedding, it's a celebration of secure attachment. And we don't just find healing from our attachment wounds with our partners — we find them in community. So this type of participation continues to

THE FINEST IN ADULT ENTERTAINMENT AT THE BEST PRICES!
HOUSE PARTY
FALCON
private moments
Rush - Jungle Juice - Maximum Impact - Swiss Navy - Amsterdam- ID Glide - COLT- Butterfly Kiss Pink- The Womanizer
UPTOWN
BOOKSTORES
ADULT VIDEO
2 LOCATIONS
WWW.UPTOWNADULT.COM

16541 Woodward Ave. at McNichols next to "Deja Vu" Highland Park
313.869.9477

16401 W. 8 Mile Between Greenfield & Southfield Detroit
313.836.0647

HOURS
Mon-Sat 10am - 9pm
Sun 12 - 6pm

Norton's
FLOWERS & GIFTS

Delivering Amazing Quality since 1892.

800-862-8667 | www.nortonsflowers.com
We Deliver the **WOW!**

LOCATIONS IN YPSILANTI & ANN ARBOR

MICHIGAN'S LGBTQ+ NEWS SOURCE SINCE 1993
BTL Between the Lines

Delivered ~~Straight~~ to Your Mailbox

Support LGBTQ+ journalism and get Between the Lines delivered to your door for just $95/year or $10/month.

WWW.PRIDESOURCE.COM/SUBSCRIBE

positively reinforce that sense of attachment."

At many traditional weddings, speeches follow a familiar formula: childhood anecdotes, playful teasing and sentimental wishes for the couple. But for LGBTQ+ couples, the journey to the altar may have included family rejection, legal battles or societal hurdles that can color the words spoken on their wedding day. Effective wedding speeches often reflect the broader social and political context.

Additionally, since many LGBTQ+ people build rich and supportive networks of chosen family, this is reflected in who makes speeches at LGBTQ+ weddings. Instead of the mother of the bride, it might be a queer elder who one of the brides met playing softball when she first came out. Instead of a childhood best friend, it might be a drag mother, or a much-loved member of the couple's extended polycule.

Unfortunately, not all LGBTQ+ wedding speeches are heartfelt affirmations. It's not uncommon to have a tense moment or two, such as when an uncle decides to declare, "Jesus just isn't on board," as if that's a wise choice (to that guy — maybe just stay home). Or perhaps a biological parent who has been absent for years but suddenly wants the mic.

Preparation is essential in these situations. Providing guests with rotten tomatoes in their wedding favor bag to throw in case a speech takes a homophobic or transphobic turn is a tempting but messy option. Instead, wedding planners advise vetting speeches beforehand and designating a "mic moderator" to step in if needed.

What else makes an LGBTQ+ wedding speech great?

Tell the real story. Share anecdotes highlighting the couple's journey, starting with their meet-cute, especially if their meeting was truly cute. Sharing obstacles the couple has overcome may be welcome, but double check with those involved closely that you're not sharing any part of the narrative that is not publicly known. Williams was surprised, for example, that her father casually mentioned she and DeBoer had met on a dating app. "It wasn't a secret but it wasn't something we were shouting from the rooftops," Williams said. "But no one cared! Now we include it every time someone asks us to relate our relationship story."

Acknowledge the moment. A 20-minute grim treatise on the history of and ongoing threat to marriage equality might make the speech memorable, but perhaps not how you intended. However, recognizing the significance of an LGBTQ+ wedding and including at least a nod to the larger context can add weight to your words.

Avoid clichés. Yes, we all know that "love is love." But you've been chosen to share a toast because you can speak to what makes this particular couple's love unique and extraordinary.

Know your audience. Not everyone in the room may be at the same point in their LGBTQ+ relationship affirmation journey. A speech that blends humor, authenticity and warmth can bridge gaps and bring people together.

Use humor wisely. Jess Pettit, a celebrated public speaker and comedian, explains, "Humor is mostly about pairing two unexpected elements together, and the glue is the speaker's vulnerability."

End with a toast. Wrap up with a powerful closing line, whether it's a simple "To love in all its forms" or a Beyoncé or Madonna lyric that sums it all up perfectly, like "We be all night, love, love, we be all night, love, love," from "Drunk in Love."

Conquer stage fright by appreciating the context. Pettit suggests: "The most powerful element of a toast or giving a speech when it isn't your job is that everyone in the room is rooting for you because they assume you won't be great. This allows you space and grace to mispronounce words, stumble through a phrase and gives the audience a chance to support and cheer you on — together you deliver the speech and that is often less scary than feeling like you are doing it all by yourself."

Ultimately, LGBTQ+ wedding speeches do more than just celebrate a couple — they stand as affirmations of love, resilience and the hard-won right to joy. In a world where queer love has often been silenced, these moments of public affirmation matter. They are both deeply personal and inherently political.

A one-of-a-kind venue,
for your once-in-a-lifetime day.

ZINGERMAN'S
Cornman farms

Dexter, MI | 734.619.8100 | www.zingermanscornmanfarms.com
Photos by Lolagrace Photography and Mae Stier Photography.

Guest List

Continued from page 23

friends were queer, I lived in a queer-friendly major city and my social media feeds were overwhelmingly queer — I worried that as I stood at the altar, which was a giant tree in the middle of the woods, it was this disdain I'd be thinking of. I worried I would be set back years, the hard work of untangling internalized homophobia and self-hatred undone.

I considered my options. I could invite everyone, or I could exclude those I was weary of. I knew that many queer people choose the latter option, understandably so. It was alluring. I tried to imagine the sense of freedom it might bring. But then I walked through the logistics of it. Inviting some members of my family without inviting others wouldn't go unnoticed. I'd have to tell my father, who was helping with the planning and paying of the wedding. I didn't want my choices to impact his relationship dynamics, nor did I want this elephant in the room at the wedding or future family get-togethers. I didn't want to field questions or confrontations about it. I wasn't afraid of people being upset with me, but I was adverse to any extra pre-wedding stress or drama.

Instead, I realized, what would bring me the most peace and least amount of stress was to invite everyone and place the burden on whether or not they'd show up on them. They *could* create the awkwardness. They *could* make this choice that would impact the future of their relationship with me.

I also realized that the allyship of those attending our wedding did not, actually, have to concern me. I could allow myself to remember what I knew to be true: I loved being a lesbian, I loved my soon-to-be wife and I loved myself. Nothing could change that. Plus, it wasn't actually in my values to expect perfection from people. I believe that people are complicated, and I believe in growth and change.

If someone showed up, that act of love and support could be enough for me for that day. I figured that those who felt strongly enough about it — those who, maybe, wouldn't grow or change — wouldn't come.

Elle Warren (right) with her wife on their wedding day. Photo: Joanna Grace

I know this isn't the right choice for everyone. For some people, the option that offers the most ease and, importantly, safety is to know for sure that the people who don't unequivocally embrace them with both their hearts and their politics won't be there. But if you're on the fence like I was, if you are struggling with the unfair burden of having to make this choice at all, consider the option of reallocating that burden.

In front of the big tree in the middle of the woods, I kissed my wife, and I didn't think of anything else. Oh, and the people I'd considered not inviting? Most of them didn't come anyway.

2025 EQUALITY VENDORS

Wedding Directory

ACCOMMODATIONS

Crowne Plaza Lansing West
925 S. Creyts Road, Lansing, MI 48917
ihg.com/crowneplaza/hotels/us/en/reservation
517-323-7100

Doubletree by Hilton Detroit/ Dearborn
5801 Southfield Freeway, Detroit, MI 48228
dearborn.doubletree.com
shawna.fleming@hilton.com
313-982-3990

Graduate Ann Arbor
615 E Huron, Ann Arbor, MI 48104
graduateannarbor.com
phourani@graduateannarbor.com
734-769-2200
Located adjacent to the University of Michigan in the charming city of Ann Arbor, the Graduate Hotel is the ideal spot for your Southern Michigan wedding. While the common areas are decorated with a delightfully wry nod to academia, the private gathering spaces are full of understated elegance. With three ballrooms to choose from, the Graduate has something for everyone.

Grand Haven Spring Lake Waterfront Holiday Inn
940 W. Savidge, Spring Lake, MI 48456
higrandhaven.com
vleaver@higrandhaven.com
888-407-6675

Irving House at Harvard
24 Irving St., Cambridge, MA 02138
irvinghouse.com
stay@irvinghouse.com
617-547-4600
Comfortable accommodations near the ambiance of Harvard Square.

Kensington Hotel
3500 South State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48108
kcourtaa.com
jsands@kcourtaa.com
734-636-0481

Labrys Resort
4115 N Scenic Hwy, Honor, MI 49640
labryswoods.com
231-882-5994

MotorCity Casino Hotel
2901 Grand River Ave., Detroit, MI 48201
motorcitycasino.com
866-782-9622

Park House Inn
888 Holland St., Saugatuck, MI 49453
parkhouseinn.com
info@parkhouseinn.com
269-857-4535

PrairieSide Suites Luxury Bed & Breakfast
3180 Washington Ave. SW, Grandville, MI 49418
prairieside.com
reservations@prairieside.com
616-538-9442

Saugatuck Weekends, Inc.
P.O. Box 339, Douglas, MI 49406
saugatuckoutdoorresorts.com
michael@cfrpm.com
616-836-6230

The Dunes Resort
333 Blue Star Hwy., Douglas, MI 49406
dunesresort.com
info@dunesresort.com
269-857-1401
Midwest's largest LGBTQ+ resort and entertainment complex located in West Michigan's beautiful Saugatuck and Douglas.

BAKERIES

Crust - a Baking Company
104 W Caroline Street, Fenton, MI 48430
crustandbeyond.com
810-629-8882

Dessert Diva
6610 Franklin Rd., Bloomfield, MI 48301
dessertdivallc.com
dessertdivallc@aol.com
248-417-0067

Good Cakes and Bakes
19363 Livernois, Detroit, MI 48221
goodcakesandbakes.com
313-468-9915

Jefferson Market
609 W. Jefferson, Ann Arbor, MI 48103
jeffersonmarketandcakery.com
cake@thejeffersonmarket.com
734-665-6666

Sorella's Custom Cakes
31672 Five Mile Rd,, Livonia, MI 48154
sorellashomemade.com
sorellas.homemade@gmail.com

Sweet Dreams
3848 Thirteen Mile Rd, Warren, MI 48092
sweetdreamsweb.com
info@sweetdreamsweb.com
586-751-8900

The Home Bakery
300 S. Main St., Rochester, MI 48307
thehomebakery.com
art@thehomebakery.com
248-651-4830

BANQUET HALL/ CATERING

Ann Arbor City Club
1830 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
annarborcityclub.org
greg@annarborcityclub.org
734-662-3279

Chive Kitchen
33043 Grand River Ave., Farmington, MI 48336
chivekitchen.com
suzy@chivekitchen.com
248-516-7144

Club Venetian
29310 John R, Madison Heights, MI 48071
clubvenetian.com
linda@clubvenetian.com
248-399-6788

Flint Institute Of Arts
1120 E Kearsley St., Flint, MI 48503
flintarts.org
info@flintarts.org
810-234-1695

Holiday Market
1203 S. Main St., Royal Oak, MI 48067
holiday-market.com
holidaymarket@holiday-market.com
248-541-1414

Jeff Zak Catering, Inc.
696 N. Mill St. #102, Plymouth, MI 48170
jeffzakcatering.com
events@jeffzakcateringmi.com
734-459-7125
We are a full service caterer located in downtown Plymouth. We have over 15 years of catering expertise to orchestrate your event beautifully. At Jeff Zak Catering we offer two in house chefs, a floral designer, a fabulous wait staff and bartenders to ensure your day is planned down to the very last detail.

Joe's Gourmet Catering & Events
33152 W. Seven Mile Rd., Livonia, MI 48152
joesproduce.com
laura@joesgourmetcatering.com
248-477-4333

Laurel Manor
39000 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150
laurelmanor.com
jenniferm@lauralmanor.com
734-779-4524

Mongers' Provisions
3127 12 Mile Rd., Berkley, MI 48072
mongersprovisions.com
info@mongersprovisions.com
248-468-4487

Portofino Restaurant, Banquet Facility & Dinner Cruises
3455 Biddle Ave., Wyandotte, MI 48192
portofinoontheriver.com
734-281-6700

Red Dunn Kitchen
1331 Trumbull St., Detroit, MI 48216
reddunnkitchen.com
ctocco@trumbullandporter.com
313-962-1187

Thomas's Catering
6371 Commerce Dr., Westland, MI 48185
thomasscatering.com
info@thomassdining.com
734-525-5610

Zuccaro Banquets & Catering
46601 Gratiot, Chesterfield Twp, MI 48051
zuccaros.com
zbc@zuccaros.com
586-949-4110

BEAUTY SPA

Beauty Bar & Boutique
444 S Main St., Plymouth, MI 48170
facebook.com/beautybardetroit
info@beautybarandboutique.com
248-979-3083

Jessica's Apothecary
920, North Main Street, Old Fourth Ward, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

LunchboxWax
800 E. Big Beaver Road, Troy, MI 48083
lunchboxwax.com
248-301-8959
Walk into LunchboxWax with hair you don't want, then leave feeling bare, beautiful and confident in just a matter of minutes! As a full-service speed-waxing salon, we deliver a unique guest experience. It's true what they say about us — hair today, gone tomorrow. We utilize refined, effective speed-waxing techniques to give you smooth, glowing skin.

CHARTER YACHTS

Infinity & Ovation Yacht Charters
400 Maple Park Blvd. Ste. 404, St. Clair Shores, MI 48081
infinityandovation.com
info@infinityandovation.com
586-217-3907

DJ

Chris-Anthony Entertainment
6103 Rochester Rd., Troy, MI 48085
Chris-AnthonyEntertainment.com
ca@danceparty.com
248-640-5326
Over 20 Years Experience as a Professional DJ/Emcee, Corporate Events, Weddings, Parties, Fashion Shows, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Graduation Parties, Sweet 16 and more!

Encore Event Group
21312 Hill Top St., Southfield, MI 48033
EncoreEventGroup.com
rob@encoreeventgroup.com
877-643-8368

Five Star Entertainment LLC
5127 Kimberly Dr., Grand Blanc, MI 48439
FiveStarEntertainmentLLC.com
info@fivestarentertainmentllc.com
810-953-0598

Super Dave DJ
18 Moser Pl, Mt. Clemens, MI 48043
superdavedj.com/photo-booths
dave@superdavedj.com
248-730-2327

ENTERTAINMENT

JD Entertainment
Clinton Twp, MI 48036
jdentertainment.com
info@jdentertainment.net
586-468-9560
DJ, Photography, Videography, Photobooth. We do it all!

EVENT PLANNERS

Joshua Lewis Berg, Humanist Celebrant
michiganhumanist.com
joshua@michiganhumanist.com
818-530-6001

Lavender Doves, LLC
P.O. Box 3361, Farmington Hills, MI 48333
lavenderdoves.com
tinalittle@lavenderdoves.com
313-506-7842

Shoreline Event Design
shorelineeventdesign.com
Taking a client-focused, collaborative approach, Shoreline Event Design works directly with you to ensure you enjoy every moment of your engagement, stress-free. Our planning services are completely customizable to every couple's unique vision for their big day, with the ability to be as hands-off or hands-on as you wish. If you'd like a seamless wedding-planning experience, look no further: Shoreline Event Design will be there for you from our initial consultation to the day you say, "I do!"

Two Unique Caterers & Event Planners
4303 Delemere Ct, Royal Oak, MI 48073
twounique.com
248-549-5242
Our company has been serving Metro Detroit since 1991, giving us established relationships with everyone in the industry. This translates to savings that we happily pass down to our clients. We are your single point of contact for every detail; culinary, linens, china, floral, entertainment, tents, decorations, ice carvings, sound & staging, etc.

FLORISTS

Bellisario Florist
23420 Gratiot Ave., Eastpointe, MI 48021
bellisarioflorist.com
info@bellisarioflorist.com
586-773-7070
Also in Birmingham at: The China Closet, 219 N. Old Woodward Ave. 48009 (by appointment only)

Blossoms
33866 Woodward Ave., Birmingham, MI 48009
blossomsbirmingham.com
customerservice@blossomsbirmingham.com
248-644-4411

Blumz by JRDesigns
1260 Library Street, Detroit, MI 48226
503 E Nine Mile Road, Ferndale, MI 48220
blumz.com
blumz@blumz.com
313-964-5777

Michael B. Anthony
1600 Clay St., Detroit, MI 48211
michaelbanthony.com
contact@michaelbanthony.com
313-215-7251

Norton's Flowers and Gifts
2900 Washtenaw Ave.,
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
nortonsflowers.com
service@nortonsflowers.com
734-434-2700
Avoid being fooled by national flower delivery sites that aren't real florists. Norton's is a real local florist, founded in 1892, with stores in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, Michigan. We offer a large variety of elegant, exotic, and vibrant flower selections imported from around the world. For weddings, events, or everyday, our goal is to help you make the greatest emotional impact possible, whether your needs are spectacular or modest. We Deliver the WOW!

Wildscape Floral Co
Ann Arbor, MI
Wildscape Floral Co. is not your average florist.
Our style is unique. We pull inspiration from the natural world, the curl of a grape vine around a branch, the cascading rush of bougainvillea against a fence, the first push of snowdrops against last year's leaves. If nature is our language, flowers are our dialect. Each piece designed is purposeful, with just a touch of wildness."

INVITATIONS

Sizemore Selectives
sizemoreselectives.com
sizemoreselectives@wowway.com
586-737-7492

JEWELERS

Abracadabra Jewelry / Gem Gallery
205 E. Liberty St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
abragem.com
734-994-4848

Coughlin Jewelers
516 South Riverside Ave., St. Clair, MI 48079
coughlinjewelers.com
contactus@coughlinjewelers.com
810-329-6866

Darakjian Jewelers
101 Willits St., Birmingham, MI 48009
darakjian.com
248-356-7140

Diamond Castle Jewelers
39955 Grand River, Novi, MI 48375
diamondcastlejewelers.com
248-442-2440

Elements Custom Jewelry Studio
512 S. Center St, Royal Oak, MI 48067
elementsjewelrystudio.com
elementsbrendan@sbcglobal.net
248-544-4111

Giorgio Conti Jewelers
22637, Woodward Avenue,
Ferndale, Michigan 48220
gconti.com
info@gconti.com
248-569-6747
Giorgio Conti Jewelers is Ferndale's trusted destination for buying and appraising fine jewelry, luxury watches, diamonds, gold, and silver. With a legacy rooted in expertise and integrity, we bring a high standard of professionalism and transparency to every evaluation, offering clients both top value and a refined, client-centered experience.

Our team of seasoned gemologists and appraisers is committed to delivering honest appraisals and top offers for exceptional pieces. Giorgio Conti Jewelers values the unique story behind each item and provides unmatched service for those seeking to sell, upgrade, or understand the worth of their cherished possessions.

Lewis Jewelers
300 S Maple Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48103
lewisjewelers.com
lewisjewelers@aol.com
734-994-5111

Matthew H. Gross Jewelry Studio
2689 Coolidge Hwy., Berkley, MI 48072
mhgjewelry.com
mhg@mhgjewelry.com
248-584-0253

Miner's Den Jewelers
3417 Rochester Rd., Royal Oak, MI 48073
minersden.com
tilla@minersden.com
248-585-6950

Orin Jewelers, Inc.
29317 Ford Rd., Garden City, MI 48135
orinjewelers.com
sales@orinjewelers.com
734-422-7030 or 248-349-6940

OFFICIANTS

American Marriage Ministries
506 2nd Ave #1008, Seattle, MI 98104
theamm.org
brittany@theamm.org
206-395-9164

Reverand Diane Clancy
49627 Teton Pass , Shelby Township, MI 48315
revdianeclancy.com
diane@revdianeclancy.com
586-935-8040
Wedding Officiant and Ordained Minister

The Wedding Connection
10544 Lincoln Dr., Huntington Woods, MI 48070
theweddingconnection.net
info@theweddingconnection.net
248-543-7396
Miriam Jerris is licensed in Ontario Canada
Wedding Officiant Mark P. Ephraim
P.O. Box 930576, Wixom, MI 48393
weddingofficiantmarkpephraim.com
markpephraim@gmail.com

PHOTO BOOTHS

Rockstar Weddings
8450 Pershing, Centerline, MI 48015
rock-star-weddings.com
yvan@rock-star-weddings.com
248-658-8210

Shutter Booth
1225 E. Eleven Mile Rd., Royal Oak, MI 48068
shutterbooth.com
info@shutterbooth.com
888-780-8837

TapSnap
6476 Orchard Lake Rd. Ste. A, West Bloomfield, MI 48322
tapsnapdetroit.com
detroit@tapsnap.net
248-419-1047

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Daniels Portraits
danielsportraits.com
info@danielsportraits.com

Derek Cookson Photography
1211 E Lincoln, Royal Oak, MI 48073
imakeyoulookawesome.com
dcooksonphoto@gmail.com
248-224-7423

Girl with the Tattoos
girlwiththetattoos.com
jess.robertson@yahoo.com
248-982-6115

It Clicks Photo LLC
21602, Shady Lane Avenue,
Saint Clair Shores, Michigan 48080
itclicksphoto.com
erika@itclicksphoto.com
586-615-8697
Metro-Detroit Wedding Photographers specializing in non-traditional + slightly candid wedding imagery

Jay Dreifus Photography
1946 Shore Hill Dr., Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302
jaydreifusphotography.com
jay@jaydreifusphotography.com
248-613-1109

Megan Hannon Photography
Based in Ann Arbor, MI
meganhannonphotography.com
info@meganhannonphotography.com
517-795-6534

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Milhem Images
243 Mulholland Dr., Ann Arbor, MI 48103
milhemimages.com
janice@milhemimages.com
248-797-2499

Natalie Mae Photography
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
nataliemaephotography.com
nataliemaephotography@yahoo.com
517-414-2117

Onyx + Opal Creative Co.
975 N. Main St., Suite H, Frankenmuth, MI 48734
onyxandopalcreativeco.com
info@onyxandopalcreativeco.com

Patterson Photography
elissapattersonphotography.com
pattersonphotographyllc@gmail.com
517-798-7407

Rawlinson Photography
1365 South Main St, Plymouth, MI 48170
rawlinsonphoto.com
rawlinsonphotography@comcast.net
734-453-8872

Russell Photography
2788 Armstrong Dr., Lake Orion, MI 48360
russellphotos.com
wrvideo@hotmail.com
248-408-7863

Sisse Photos
Ferndale, MI 48220
sissephotos.com
sissephoto@gmail.com
248-756-1818

That Gay Photographer
thatgayphotographer.com
hello@thatgayphotographer.com
586-651-5095

TRAVEL

Rainbow Getaways
rainbowgetaways.net
contactus@rainbowgetaways.net
321-344-9001

Wave Goodbye Vacations and Honeymoons
Rochester Hills, MI 48309
rainbowweddingnetwork.com
amy@wavegoodbyevacations.com
248-794-0477

TUXEDOS

Chelsea Menswear & Tuxedos
2944 Biddle Ave., Wyandotte, MI 48192
chelseamenswear.com
evan@chelseamenswear.com
734-282-7755

The Tux Shop on Woodward
33437 Woodward Ave., Birmingham, MI 48009
thetuxshoponwoodward.com
info@thetuxshoponwoodward.com
248-644-5055

Todd's Menswear
520 West 11 Mile Rd., Royal Oak, MI 48067
esuit.com
248-865-9963

VENUES

2Gather Elegant Event
3391 Cross Creek Parkway,
Auburn Hills, Michigan 48326
2gathermore.com
kim@2gathermore.com
248-724-6282
Modern, Upscale, and Private—Your Dream Wedding Venue Awaits!
Looking for a wedding venue that combines elegance, flexibility, and personalized service? 2Gather Elegant Event Venue offers a stunning setting for up to 225 guests, complete with get-ready suites, a dedicated ceremony room, beautiful patios, and a breathtaking ballroom.
As an open vendor venue, we give you the freedom to choose your own caterers, bartenders, photographers, florists, and DJs—allowing you to create a wedding that reflects your style and budget. Need recommendations? We provide a curated list of top-tier vendors who are familiar with our space to help bring your vision to life seamlessly.

Andiamo Banquets & Catering
7096 E. 14 Mile Rd., Warren, MI 48092
andiamocatering.com/warren/
dlagocki@andiamoitalia.com
586-268-0200

Barrister Gardens
24225 Harper Ave., St. Clair Shores, MI 48080
barristergardens.com
barristergardens@gmail.com
586-773-4040

Burton Manor Banquet and Conference Center
27777 Schoolcraft Rd., Livonia, MI 48150
burtonmanor.net
eventexperts@burtonmanor.net
734-427-9110

Chippewa Hotel Waterfront
7221 Main Street, P.O. Box 250,
Mackinac Island, Michigan 49757
chippewahotel.com
bart@chippewahotel.com
906-847-3341
Established in 1902, the Chippewa Hotel Waterfront has 57 guest rooms and an incredible view of Main Street and the Mackinac Island Marina. Home to the famous Pink Pony, where live music can be found every night. We are open seasonally from May through October.

Delta Hotels Marriott
31500 Wick Rd., Romulus, MI 48174
marriott.com/DTWDE
enrique.martinez@rkjhotel.com
734-351-5205

Detroit Foundation Hotel
250 W Larned St, Detroit, MI 48226
detroitfoundationhotel.com
eohara@detroitfoundationhotel.com
313-800-5500

Detroit Marriott Livonia
17100 Laurel Park North, Livonia, MI 48152
marriott.com/hotels/travel/dtwli-detroit-marriott-livonia
734-462-3100
Weddings and Commitment Ceremonies Welcome!

Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway St., Detroit, MI 48226
michiganopera.org/detroit-opera-house-events
313-395-0206

Eastern Michigan University
900 Oakwood - Student Center #312,
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
emich.edu/bookemu
bookemu@emich.edu
734-487-4108

Embassy Suites by Hilton Detroit Troy/ Auburn Hills
850 Tower Drive, Troy, MI 48098
embassysuites3.hilton.com
dtttr_ds@hilton.com
248-879-7500

Embassy Suites Livonia
19525 Victor Parkway, Livonia, MI 48153
detroitlivonia.embassysuites.com
734-855-8891

Farina's Banquet Center
2485 Cooldige Hwy, Berkley, MI 48072
farinasbanquet.com
brooke_farinas@yahoo.com
248-546-7800

Harmonie Club

311 E. Grand River Ave,
Detroit, MI 48226
313-701-3084

Located in Detroit, MI, the Harmonie Club is a gorgeous wedding venue that sets the stage for an unforgettable celebration with loved ones. The property is perfect for all kinds of special occasions, whether you're hosting a gathering with your nearest and dearest or a grand soiree. With excellent customer service, a selection of modern facilities, and several event spaces, Harmonie Club is the perfect choice for you!

Hyatt Place and Diamond Center at Suburban Collection Showplace
46100 Grand River Ave., Novi, MI 48374
diamondbanquetcenter.com
dc@suburbanshowplace.com
248-348-5600 x231

MacRay Harbor Event Center
30675 North River Rd., Harrison Twp., MI 48045
macray.com
586-468-1900

Matthaei Botanical Gardens

1800 N. Dixboro Rd.,
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
mbgna.umich.edu
734-647-7600

For your special day, plan a wedding made by nature. Set your wedding outdoors in one of our formal gardens or spaces, or indoors amid the lush tropical setting of the Conservatory.

MGM Grand Detroit
1777 Third St., Detroit, MI 48226
mgmgranddetroit.com
877-888-2121
Five-star hotel and casino in the heart of downtown Detroit.

Moonrise Beach

2301 S. US Hwy 23,
Greenbush Township, Michigan 48738
liznaturally.com/MoonriseBeach
moonrisebeachmichigan@gmail.com
989-724-3155

Moonrise Beach is a private Lake Huron venue for all kinds of outdoor celebrations — weddings, family gatherings, engagements, proposals, anniversaries and celebrations of life. A place of love and kindness where people can connect, laugh, play, dance and sing.

Otsego Club and Resort
696 M-32 E., PO Box 556, Gaylord, MI 49735
otsegoclub.com
989-732-5181

Perry Hotel

100 Lewis Street,
Petoskey, MI 49770
theperryhotel.com
guestservices@theperryhotel.com
231-347-4000

For over 122 years, Perry Hotel has stood as Petoskey's quintessential landmark, evoking historic grandeur that embraces modern sophistication. More than a stay, it's a favorite destination to cherish history, seek cultural encounters, and thrive on Northern Michigan's renowned outdoor lifestyle. Revel in the scenic vistas and indulge in our first-class service for an extraordinary experience.

Radisson Detroit - Farmington Hills
31525 West 12 Mile Rd, Farmington Hills, MI 48336
radisson.com
248-553-0000

Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoosen Farm
1005 Van Hoosen Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48306
rochesterhills.org/museum
248-841-2674

Ronora Lodge and Retreat Center
9325 Dwight Boyer Rd., Watervliet, MI 49098
ronoralodge.com
ronoralodge@gmail.com
269-463-6315

Royal Park Hotel
600 E. University Dr., Rochester, MI 48307
royalparkhotel.net
jkovacs@royalparkhotel.net
248-652-2600

Shanty Creek Resort
5780 Shanty Creek Rd., Bellaire, MI 49615
shantycreek.com
plockhart@shantycreek.com
231-533-3092

Stafford's Bay View Inn

2011 Woodland Ave,
Petoskey, MI 49770
thebayviewinn.com
bayview@staffords.com
231-347-2771

Our charming Country Inn built in 1886, has been enchanting visitors for over 130 years.

Sycamore Hills Golf Club
48787 North Avenue, Macomb, MI 48042
sycamorehills.com
banquets@sycamorehills.com
586-598-9500

Tandale Nature Barn

2605 South Old US Highway 23,
Brighton, Michigan 48114
tandalenaturebarn.com
tandalenaturebarn@gmail.com
810-222-9704

Tandale Nature Barn is Southeast Michigan's premier wedding and event venue set in the heart of a certified wildlife habitat. Surrounded by 25 acres of serene landscapes, we offer an unforgettable experience where nature meets timeless elegance. Tandale Nature Barn offers an extraordinary setting where nature's beauty and refined luxury come together, creating the perfect backdrop for your unforgettable celebration. Immerse yourself in the serenity of the outdoors while enjoying unparalleled luxury for a truly unforgettable experience.

The Gem & Colony Club
333 Madison Ave., Detroit, MI 48226
gemtheatre.com
313-963-9800

The Henry Autograph Collection
300 Town Center Dr., Dearborn, MI 48126
behenry.com
laura.bolduc@behenry.com
313-441-2000

The Peninsula Room at Bowers Harbor Estates
13512 Peninsula Dr., Old Mission Peninsula, Traverse City, MI 49686
Peninsularoom.com
barb@missiontable.net
231-944-6984

The Renaissance Baronette Hotel
27790 Novi Rd., Novi, MI 48377
thebaronette.com
amber.gaines@thebaronette.com
248-349-7800

The Village Chapel
123 Second St., Fowlerville, MI 48836
loveislovechapel.com
loveislovechapel@gmail.com
517-223-0517

Twin Lakes Golf & Swim Club
455 Twin Lakes Dr., Oakland, MI 48363-2442
mytwinlakesgc.com
abaker@twinlakesgc.com
248-650-4550

Waldenwoods Resort and Conference Center
2975 Old US 23, Howell, MI 48855
waldenwoods.com
anne@waldenwoods.com
810-632-6401

Waterview Loft at Port Detroit
130 E. Atwater St., Detroit, MI 48226
waterviewloft.com
info@waterviewloft.com
313-307-4925

Westcroft Gardens & Farm
21803 W. River Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138
westcroftgardens.com
info@westcroftgardens.com
734-676-2444

Willowbrook Mill
P O Box 719, 201 Mill St., Northport, MI 49670
willowbrookmill.com
mimi@willowbrookmill.com
231-534-2142

Zingerman's Cornman Farms

8540 Island Lake Road,
Dexter, MI 48130
734-619-8100
zingermanscornmanfarms.com

Zingerman's Cornman Farms is an event venue, culinary destination and picturesque estate mere minutes from Ann Arbor—but feels like it's worlds away. Whether the wedding of your dreams is indoor or outdoor, intimate or grand, our property has stunning event spaces that will provide the perfect backdrop to your celebrations.

VIDEOGRAPHY

Modern Touch Media
moderntouchmedia.com
kyle@moderntouchmedia.com

Swensen Wedding Services
39320 Venetian Dr., Harrison Twp., MI 48045
swensenweddingservices.com
info@swensenvideo.com
586-491-8888

Wedit
29630 Orchard Lake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48334
wedit.com
info@wedit.com
877-699-3348

WEDDING DRESSES

B. Ella Bridal
570 S. Main, Plymouth, MI 48170
b-ella-bridal.com
734-459-0000

Bombshell Bridal Boutique
27887 Harper Ave., St. Clair Shores, MI 48081
bombshellbridal.boutique
bombshellbridalboutique@yahoo.com
586-294-7280
Bombshell Bridal caters to all sized brides, offering plus-sized wedding gowns and formal attire.

Sylvia Ann LLC
2279 Sunny Ridge Drive, Pinckney, MI 48169
sylviaann.com
734-878-9044

The Wedding Shoppe
2186 Coolidge Highway, Berkley, MI 48072
theweddingshoppe.net
info@theweddingshoppe.net
248-541-1988

Christ Is Risen! Alleluia!

Join the Holy Week and Easter celebrations at these area Lutheran churches - churches that have made a public affirmation of welcome to YOU - members, family and friends of the LGBTQIA+ community.

This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here.

ANN ARBOR
Lutheran Campus Ministry
Lord of Light Lutheran Church
801 S. Forest Ave.
www.lordoflight.org

King of Kings Lutheran Church
2685 Packard Rd.
www.kingofkingslutheran.org

Trinity Lutheran Church
1400 Stadium Blvd.
www.trinityA2.org

Zion Lutheran Church
1501 W. Liberty St
https://zlc-aa.org

BATTLE CREEK
Trinity Lutheran Church
2055 Columbia Ave. E.
www.tlcbattlecreek.org

BURTON
Our Risen Lord Lutheran Church
4040 Lapeer Rd.
www.ourrisenlordelca.com

DUNDEE
St. John Lutheran Church
460 Riley St.
www.stjohnsondundee.wordpress.com

EAST LANSING
University Lutheran Church
1020 S. Harrison Rd.
www.ulcel.org

St. Paul Lutheran Church
3383 E. Lake Lansing Rd.
www.stpaul-el.org

FARMINGTON HILLS
Hope Lutheran Church
39200 West Twelve Mile Rd.
www.hope-lutheran-church.com

FERNDALE
Zion Lutheran Church
143 Albany St.
www.zionlutheranmi.org

FREELAND
Zion Lutheran Church
545 7th St.
www.zionfreeland.org

GRAND RAPIDS
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
250 Commerce Ave. SW
www.bethlehemchurchgr.org

KALAMAZOO
Lutheran Church of the Savior
3616 East G Avenue
www.lcoskzoo.com

KENTWOOD
Ascension Lutheran Church
4252 Breton Rd. SE
www.twochurches.org

LIVONIA
Emmanuel Lutheran Church
30650 Six Mile Road
www.emmanuel-livonia.org

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
34567 Seven Mile Road
www.holycrosslivonia.org

MONROE
Christ Lutheran Church
225 E. Elm Ave.
www.christmonroe.weebly.com

MOUNT PLEASANT
Immanuel Lutheran Church
320 South Bradley St.
www.immanuelmp.com

OKEMOS
Faith Lutheran Church
4515 Dobie Rd.
www.faithlutheranokemos.org

PORT HURON
St. Martin Lutheran Church
805 Chestnut St.
www.stmartinlutheran.net

ROCHESTER HILLS
Abiding Presence Lutheran Church
1550 Walton Rd.
www.AbidingPresence.org

SAGINAW
Our Saviour Lutheran Church
2525 Hemmeter Rd.
www.oursavioursaginaw.org

SAINT JOSEPH
Saron Lutheran Church
510 Main St
www.saronlutheran.org

SALINE
Holy Faith Church
6299 Saline-Ann Arbor Rd.
www.holy-faith-church.org

TRENTON
St. Philip Lutheran Church
1790 Fort St.
www.stphilipelca.com

WATERFORD
Christ Lutheran Church
5987 Williams Lake Rd.
www.christwaterford.org

Celebrate *Love* in Northern Michigan

Stunning Indoor & Outdoor Venues

Photo Courtesy of
The Weber Photographers

PERRY HOTEL
A PETOSKEY LANDMARK SINCE 1899

100 Lewis St., Petoskey, MI

STAFFORD'S
BAY VIEW INN
A PETOSKEY LANDMARK SINCE 1886

2011 Woodland Ave., Petoskey, MI

staffordsweddings.com | 231-348-6017